DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 195 CG 005 697

AUTHOR Bluhm, Harry P.
TITLE The Employment Counselor as a Vocational Counselor.
INSTITUTION American Personnel and Guidance Association, Washington, D.C.; Utah Univ., Salt Lake City.
PUB DATE 24 Mar 70
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 22-26, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
DESCRIPTORS Counseling, *Counselor Functions, Counselor Role, Dropout Programs, *Dropout Rehabilitation, Employment, *Employment Counselors, *Occupational Guidance, *Problems, Vocational Counseling

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of the employment counselor as a vocational counselor to dropout discussing such topics as: (1) functions, (2) problems of dropouts and their counseling implications, and (3) counseling the dropout. Included in the functions are: (1) representing the Employment Office in coordinating all programs that would assist the dropout; (2) providing vocational guidance; and (3) establishing a mutual trust and confidence with the dropout. Problems of dropouts included in the discussion are: (1) lack of vocational maturity; (2) an impaired family relationship; (3) problems in school; and (4) inadequate motivation. Some of the barriers to counseling the dropout are: (1) the dropout's feeling of inadequacy; (2) communication barriers; (3) the dropout's physical appearance and mode of dress; and (4) counselor prejudices. The following recommendations are made to employment counselors in the counseling process: (1) their responsibility is more than job placement; (2) they should provide help in those areas in which the dropout is willing to accept assistance; and (3) they should help the dropout develop realistic goals. (KJ)

CG 005 697

ED042195

THE EMPLOYMENT COUNSELOR AS A VOCATIONAL COUNSELOR*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

One of the goals of the nation is that our economy and society will provide equal employment opportunity, adequate education and training, and a decent standard of living for all Americans. Ideally, this is the goal, but in reality we fall short of it's attainment. Consider one segment of our society- the dropout, those youth ages 16-21, who are both out of school and out of work. These youth are ill equipped to function in our modern and complex society. On the one hand, they lack sufficient education to compete in a society that financially and socially rewards learning. On the other hand, they lack the marketable skills necessary to secure a stable and permanent position in the labor force.

During the mid-sixties, an estimate was made that a quarter of a million of these youth are ending up on a human slag heap every year (8). Many groups and agencies (both governmental and private) recognizing the magnitude of the problem and the plight of the dropout, have sought to salvage as many of these youth as possible. Among these agencies, is the Employment Security Office.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of the employment counselor as a vocational counselor to dropouts discussing such topics as, (1) functions, (2) problems of dropouts and their counseling implications and (3) counseling the dropout.

FUNCTIONS OF THE EMPLOYMENT COUNSELOR

First, some functions of the employment counselor. Ideally, the employment counselor would be that one person who would represent the Employment Office in it's efforts to serve the dropout. In dealing with what to him may be an impersonal organization, the dropout needs a psychological home base, in this instance, the

CG 005 697

* Paper delivered at the American Personnel and Guidance Association, March 24, 1970, at New Orleans by Harry P. Bluhm, University of Utah.

employment counselor, who would be a friend and who would personalize his relations with the Employment Office. This means one function of the employment counselor would be to represent the Office in coordinating all programs that would assit the dropout. Such a practice would avoid the impersonal "conveyor belt" of referral procedures that often shunts the dropouts from one agency to another or from one unit within the Office to another (2 p.3).

Vocational counseling, it seems, has not been experienced by many dropouts. According to one study, three-fourths of all dropouts- Negro and White- received no vocational guidance either from their school or Employment Service Office. (12) The challenge is very clear to the employment counselor; e.g., are they doing as much as possible in preparing dropouts for the world of work? Many dropouts of their own volition do not seek the services of the Employment Office. For others, the office location, either in the downtown or business area, often is a deterrant. In part, this has been alleviated by the placement of Youth Offices in community neighborhoods. In fulfilling the function of providing vocational guidance to dropouts, employment counselors should exhaust every effort to insure that they are reached.

Though some evidence has been presented to suggest that counseling may help to keep potential dropouts in school (5, 16), for too many dropouts have developed a mistrust of counselors. This mistrust may have developed out of the inaccessibility of some school counselors (9) and the failure of others to understand and meet their needs. The employment counselor, as one of his functions, must demonstrate to the dropout that he is genuinely interested in him as a person and that he is not fulfilling a job because that is what he is paid to do. If vocational guidance is to commence, a mutual trust and confidence must be established.

COUNSELING PROBLEMS OF DROPOUTS

This brings us to our next area of discussion, the various kinds of problems

dropout youth present to the employment counselor, and their counseling implications. One of these problems is the lack of vocational maturity. The dropout, in many instances, knows very little about the world of work. Frequently, he is handicapped by the lack of knowledge of jobs and the ways in which to look for jobs. In a survey of dropout youth in Philadelphia, nearly one half of the 450 youths interviewed were unable to express any job preference (11 p.86). Further, the dropout may be unfamiliar with his own ability and thus make unrealistic goals or job plans. The employment counselor, consequently, has to be very careful to not deflate these plans besides helping the dropout develop job and job seeking skills.

A second type of problem that presents itself to the employment counselor is the impaired family relationship that exists for some dropouts. This condition may have resulted from such factors as a broken home, sibling rivalry, squabbling and dissension in the family and uncommunicativeness between family members. Just because a dropout lives with his natural parents is no assurance that the home influence is healthy. One study showed that school officials felt, that for those dropouts living with their natural parents, the home influence for 42 percent of these youth was fair or poor (13 p.56).

The employment counselor should further recognize that for those dropouts who come from homes where no male head is to be found that juvenile delinquency or other behavior problems may result. Also, a lack of identity with a father figure may warp the sex and occupational roles of the male dropout. Thus, employment counselors may find themselves being models for these youth.

Difficulties encountered in school constitutes a third problem area. School failure and dislike of school are frequently cited as reasons by dropouts for terminating school (13 p.108). As a result, for many of these individuals, a negative self-concept occurs. Though they may have the ability to succeed in school, the image they have of themselves is often one of failure and this projects itself

in their attitude toward the world of work. The employment counselor is thus confronted with the task of providing meaningful guidance to these youth by being sensitive to their needs and relating these needs to the world of work through success experiences.

Decision making, the process of weighing the alternatives and making the best choice, is a fourth problem area employment counselors encounter when working with dropouts. True dropouts often decide that they want to leave school, but in many instances they are pushouts rather than dropouts. Once faced with the choice of making the day by day decisions that have implications for their future, however, many find themselves without the necessary skills. Dependency on others often results. Employment counselors frequently may find themselves having to devote attention to helping dropouts building these skills, enabling them to do as Cottle says, helping them decide what they want to do by "exploring all possible alternatives open to them and having them make their own choice (3 p.191)".

A final problem employment counselors encounter when working with dropouts is that of inadequate motivation. Dropouts are motivated but toward the attainment of immediate goals; e.g., money, food, clothing and shelter. They have a tendency to shut out talk about planning for the future or building for the years to come (2 p.22). The employment counselor should recognize that dropouts can be motivated if they see a need and how that need might be met. Also, the employment counselor must help the dropout assume more responsibility for his actions to develop on his part a sense of resourcefulness and initiative.

COUNSELING THE DROPOUT

The final area of discussion is that of counseling the dropout. To begin with the employment counseling needs to be cognizant of some of the barriers that may breakdown and sever the counseling relationship. Briefly stated, some of these are:

(1) The dropout's feelings of inadequacy, an inadequacy stemming from failure

and frustrations resulting in disillusionment and lack of faith both as to his own potentialalities and in the ability of the Employment Office to help him.

(2) Communication barriers, (10 p. 113) the inability of the dropout and the employment counselor to talk the same language using words that have a common meaning.

(3) The client's physical appearance and mode of dress, (14 p. 72) which may not be consistent with that which the employment counselor expects or desires.

(4) Counselor Prejudices, which may lead to a value confrontation when the counselor does not understand the nature and needs of the various cultural-sub-groups with whom he may work.

It it not within the scope of this paper to outline in detail some of the counseling approaches that might be taken by the employment counselor in counseling dropout youth. This is the subject of other papers to be presented at this session. Three recommendations are made, however, as to the employment counselors role in the counseling process.

First, the employment counselors should recognize that their responsibility to dropouts is more than job placement. They need to give attention to attitudes and values (7 and 2 p. 6-7). Katz has said, "The foundation for an effective occupational choice must lie in the values and goals of an individual, for it is these which enable him to order his current achievement with reference to the future (6 p. 18)." As an illustration, the job attitudes of many dropouts has arisen not from the level of aspiration, the aspiring for success and social status, but from the level of frustration, frustrations just to attain a job. As to dropout youth from the slum areas, they frequently have been told to be realistic, to accept the very types of low-income, low prestige jobs from which they hope to escape (11 p.82).

The role of the employment counselor under these circumstances seems to be more than being a good listener, a provider of information, an adviser or appraiser of client abilities, attitudes and interest. He must assume the role of enabler -

helping his client escape from rather than adjust to an environment that might be destructive to his interests (2 p.6). In this way, positive attitudes may result. Also, it should be recognized that the attitudes and behaviors of drop-outs can be shaped, formed and developed through peer pressure in group counseling (15).

Second, the employment counselor needs to work with the dropout in those areas he feels ready to accept assistance (7). In doing so he should have some knowledge of the dropouts (1) immediate problems, (2) readiness to work on these problems and (3) willingness to assume responsibility in resolving these problems. Provision should be made to provide opportunities for the dropout to try out decisions and activities related to these problems. Client involvement should be considered a Key Stone in the counseling process.

Third, the employment counselor should seek to help the dropout develop realistic goals. As mentioned earlier, many dropouts have unrealistic goals or job plans. They can be used as a point of departure though in establishing concrete and immediate goals that in a general way are related to the dropout area of ambition (2 p. 23). The behavior required to reach these goals should be specified by breaking them down into manageable steps that the dropout can master one at a time (10 p. 116).

If dropout youth are immediately placed in an existing level job they should as, Gordon states, "understand that such placement is to function as a stepping stone to something better (4 p. 134)".

In summary, the task of the employment counselor in helping dropout youth become useful to themselves and to society is a tremendous one. The central theme of this paper is that the employment counselor's function is more than that of placing youth in jobs. Instead, it is one of being a vocational counselor, understanding dropout youth for what they are and what they desire to become. This means protecting their rights to lead their own life and in providing meaningful assistance to enable them to increase the wisdom of the decisions they reach.

REFERENCES

1. Amos, William E., "The Nature of Disadvantaged Youth," Chapter 2, Counseling the Disadvantaged Youth, (Amos, W. E. & Grambs, J. D. editors). Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 13-29.

2. Amos, William E., and Grambs, Jean D., "Introduction," Chapter 1, Counseling the Disadvantaged Youth, (Amos, W. E., & Grambs, J. D. editors). Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 1-12.

3. Cottle, William C., "Counseling the School Dropout," Chapter 9, Counseling the Disadvantaged Youth, (Amos, W. E., & Grambs, J. D. editors). Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 190-205.

4. Gordon, Jesse E., "Counseling the Disadvantaged Boy," Chapter 7, Counseling the Disadvantaged Youth, (Amos, W. E. & Grambs, J. D. editors). Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 119-168.

5. Hill, George E., and Morrow, Robert O., "Guidance and the Dropout Rate," Vocational Guidance Quarterly Summer, 1957, p. 155.

6. Katz, Martin, Decisions and Values: A Rationale for Secondary School Guidance. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1963.

7. Leubling, Harry E., "Counseling With Dropouts: A Three Year Study." Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 1967, 15: 173-80.

8. Manpower Report of the President, (Washington D. C., Government Printing Office, 1966.)

9. Noyes, K. J., and McAndrew, G. L., "Is This What Schools Are For?" Saturday Review, 1968-69; 58-59.

10. Orem, R. C., "Language and the Culturally Disadvantaged," Chapter 6, Counseling the Disadvantaged Youth, (Amos, W. E., & Grambs, J. D., editors). Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 101-118.

11. U. S. Department of Labor- Manpower Administration, Joblessness and Poverty In Urban Slums.

12. U. S. Department of Labor- Special Labor Force Report No. 46, Out of School Youth, February, 1963.

13. Utah State Board of Education, The Utah School Dropout: 1962-64, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1966, pp. 109

14. Vontress, Clemmont, "Cultural Differences for Counseling," J. Negro Education Summer 1969, 38: 266-275.

15. "What Works With Dropouts: A Job Corps Report" Nations Schools 81: 52-56, May, 1968.

16. Young, Joe M., "Can Counseling Reduce Dropouts?" The Clearing House, September, 1955, pp. 22-23.